A Probe into Wilāyah and its Social Dimensions

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Abstract

The issue of wilāyah is one of the most fundamental Islamic concepts in the Holy Qur'an and Islamic hadiths. The purpose of this article is twofold. Firstly it makes an effort to study the nature and meaning of wilāyah and secondly, by studying the social aspects of wilāyah, it aims to explain that wilāyah (or *muwālāt*) is a strong spiritual bond between believers and the Infallibles. As will be explained later on in the article, for believers wilāyah produces the same fate and aims both in this world and the hereafter. Contrary to what most people believe, wilāyah is not just the relationship between each individual believer and the Prophet and Imams, rather it is the relationship between the community of believers as a whole and the Prophet and Imams and also the relationship amongst the believers themselves. The wilāyah of Allah swt and His walīs creates a united society and an integrated

body of believers who demonstrate love, devotion and dedication amongst themselves. This type of wilāyah is the soul of Islam and is able to give spiritual life to the Islamic ummah and bring unity to it. This article examines issues such as the essential elements**,** hierarchical order and mutuality of wilāyah, whether or not unbelievers are under the wilāyah of Allah swt, and also the social function of wilāyah. By doing so, one can improve one's understanding of wilāyah and also take a small step towards strengthening religious brotherhood and achieving a society governed by wilāyah. Indeed, strengthening and reinforcing the relationship of wilāyah amongst the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S) results in the best conditions for achieving Islamic unity and furthermore, Islamic unity results in the ideal conditions for friendship and collaboration of all believers in God throughout the world.

The concept of wilāyah has a great and very special status in the Holy Qur'an and Islamic hadiths. Many studies have been conducted, extended discussions have been held by commentators, theologians, and mystics and many works have been written about this issue. However, it seems that it is necessary to do much more, both from the theoretical and the practical aspects. In this article, we seek help from Allah swt in attempting to profoundly study the meaning and nature of wilāyah from the theoretical point of view, and to illustrate that wilāyah, by its very nature, is a matter which relates to the community and not just to individuals. Limiting wilāyah to a

relationship between individuals and the Infallibles is not only incorrect according to Islamic principles, but also prevents fulfillment of some of the main functions of wilāyah in a religious society.

The meaning of wilāyah

Wilāyah has many different meanings, but it usually means guardianship, assistance or friendship. Accordingly, walī (in Arabic, the subjective noun derived from wilāyah) or mawlā (in Arabic, another subjective noun derived from the same root) means guardian, assistant, or friend. By examining verbal references and textual inferences, one can find out which meaning is intended. For example, in the following verse from the Holy Qur'an, Allah swt says:

انما وليكم الله و رسوله و والذين آمنوا الذين يقيمون الصلوة و يؤتون الزكاة و هم راكعون

> "Your walī is only Allah, His messenger, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the alms while bowing down" (5:55)

In the above-mentioned verse, due to verbal and historical references (the specific historical circumstances of the sending down of the verse), walī cannot just mean assistant or friend, but rather it conveys

the idea of a guardian or the one whose orders must be obeyed or the one who has the right to take control of people.[1]

In the following two verses, mawlā also means guardian:

و ان تولّوا فاعلموا ان الله مولاكم نعم المولي و نعم النصير

"And if they turn away, then know that Allah is your Master (mawlā): an excellent Master (mawlā) and an excellent Helper!" (8:40)

... فاقيموا الصلوه و آتوا الزكوه و اعتصموا بالله هو مولاكم فنعم المولي و نعم النصير

"…So maintain the prayer, give the alms, and hold fast to Allah. He is your Master (mawlā) an excellent Master (mawlā) and an excellent Helper." (22:78)

In these two verses, both Allah swt's guardianship and His assistance are emphasized. If mawlā was supposed to mean 'assistant', the phrase 'an excellent Helper' would be a pointless repetition which served no purpose.

Are the unbelievers under the wilāyah of Allah swt?

An important point in the Holy Qur'an is that on some occasions Allah swt is considered as the walī for the faithful and it is mentioned that the faithless (the unbelievers) do not have a mawlā:

ذلک بأن الله مولي الذين آمنوا و انّ الكافرين لا مولي لهم

"That is because Allah is the mawlā of the faithful, and because the faithless have no mawlā." [2] (47:11)

However in other verses of the Holy Qur'an, Allah swt is considered to be the mawlā of everyone, even the faithless. Thus it is stated:

و ردّوا الي الله مولاهم الحق و ضلّ عنهم ما كانوا يفترون

"And they will be returned to Allah, their real mawlā, and what they used to fabricate will forsake them." (10:30)

هنالك الولايه لله الحق

"There, all wilāyah belongs to Allah." (18:44)

In addition to the two verses mentioned above, there are other verses which state that the faithless have illegitimate and tyrannical mawlās or walīs. For example, in Chapter 2, Al-Baqarah, verse 257, we read:

الله ولي الذين آمنوا يخرجهم من الظلمات الي النور و الذين كفروا اولياؤهم الطاغوت يخرجونهم من النور الي الظلمات اولئک اصحاب النار هم فيها خالدون

"Allah is the Walī of the faithful: He brings them out of darkness into light. As for the faithless, their walīs are the Rebels, who drive them out of light into darkness. They shall be the inmates of the Fire, and they shall remain in it [forever]."

Also in Chapter 28, Al-Qasas, verse 41, these walīs are described as those leaders who invite the faithless to the fire of Hell:

جعلناهم ائمة يدعون الي النار و يوم القيامة لا ينصرون

"We made them leaders who invite to the Fire, and on the Day of Resurrection they will not receive any help."

By conducting an in-depth analysis of these three kinds of verses, the following points can be deduced:

1. Allah swt is the Guardian (Walī) of the faithful amongst the peopel, and so, because the faithful also put themselves under His

guardianship by their own free will, He guides them and helps them, supports them through difficult times and circumstances and brings them to their destination.

2. Allah swt is also the Guardian (Walī) of the faithless. Their existence and all aspects of their lives depend on divine blessings just like all other creatures.

3. Using their free will in the wrong way, the faithless hand over control to those who are neither guided, nor can direct others, and who are neither supported, nor can support others, instead of to Allah swt. The faithless have chosen tyrants and evil powers as their walīs, those who are neither beneficial to them nor are capable of doing anything to help them in this life or in the hereafter. The Holy Qur'an states:

ام اتخذوا من دونه اولياء فالله هو الولي و هو يحيي الموتي و هو علي كل شيء قدير

> "Have they taken walīs besides Him? [Say,] "It is Allah, who is the Walī, and He revives the dead, and He has power over all things." (42:9)

4. Only the faithful have a mawlā who loves them for their own sake and helps them without any expectations. However, false leaders

invite their followers to the Fire of Hell due to their selfishness and self-interest.[3]

It is important to note that we have all been given free will by Allah swt and it is entirely up to us to make responsible choices throughout our lives, for example, as in the above case, regarding the kind of people we choose as our guardians to protect, support and help us.

Hierarchical order of wilāyah

Throughout history, Allah, the Exalted, who is the Walī and Mawlā of the faithful, has chosen certain people as walīs for them due to His Grace and Blessing. For example, He chose the Holy Prophet (S) and his rightful successors as the walīs for the people of the final stage of life in this world. Allah swt appointed them to guide and help people.

It is important to note that this kind of wilāyah is subordinate to Allah swt's wilāyah and not at the same level. The Holy Qur'an disproves any kind of partnership with Allah:

> و قل الحمدلله الذي لم يتّخذ ولداً و لم يكن له شريک في الملک و لم يكن له ولي من الذل و كبّره تكبيرا

> "And say," All praise belongs to Allah, who has neither taken any son, nor has He any partner in

sovereignty, nor has He [taken] any walī out of weakness," and magnify Him with a magnification [worthy of Him]." (17:111)

ألم تعلم أنّ الله له ملک السموات و الارض
و ما لکم من دون الله من ولي و لا نصير

"Do you not know that to Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth? And besides Allah you do not have any walī or any helper." (2:107)[4]

While other verses state:

إنّما وليکم الله و سوله و الذين آمنوا
الذين يقيمون الصلوة و يؤتون الزکاة
و هم راکعون

"Your walī is only Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakat while bowing down." (5:55)

... و اجعل لنا من لدنک وليا و اجعل
لنا من لدنک نصيرا

"…and appoint for us a walī from You, and appoint for us a helper from You" (4:75)

... فهب لي من لدنک ولياً يرثني و يرث من آل يعقوب و اجعله ربّ رضيا

"…So grant me from Yourself walī (an heir) who may inherit from me and inherit from the House of Jacob, and make him, my Lord, pleasing to You." (19:5, 6)

Arabic linguists and people with appropriate knowledge understand the difference between the two phrases "*min dūn*" (which in Arabic means "beside") and "*min ladun*" (which in Arabic means "from") in the above verses. If it was "beside Allah" ("*min dūnillah*" in Arabic), it would be incorrect from the point of view of Allah swt's Dignity. But the phrase "from You" ("*min ladunka*" in Arabic) precisely denotes dignity and even brings honour to the slaves and thus is surely not in conflict with Allah swt's Dignity.

This wilāyah indicates that Allah swt, out of His Mercy, has appointed his walīs "who make mighty the walīs and abase the enemies"[5] in order to pave the way towards dignity for the faithful.

Originally Might and Glory belong to Allah swt Alone:

فلله العزة جميعا

Indeed all might belongs to Allah" (10:65)

And then they belong to Allah's walīs such as the Holy Prophet (S) and the faithful:

لله العزة و لرسوله و للمؤمنين ...

> "Yet all might belongs to Allah and His Apostle, and the faithful…" (63:8)

Those who take the faithless as their walīs are in fact seeking might, but they will not find it:

الذين يتّخذون الكافرين اولياء من دون المؤمنين أيبتغون عندهم العزة فانّ العزة لله جميعا

> "-- those who take the faithless for walīs instead of the faithful. Do they seek might with them? [If so], indeed all might belongs to Allah." (4:139)

Wilāyah is mutual

Another important point about the word wilāyah and its derivatives is that they are used in a sense of mutuality. For example, in the following verse, to believe in the wilāyah of Allah, the Holy Prophet and his successors (the chief amongst whom was the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali (a.s) who gave zakāt while bowing down, according to a previously quoted verse) is called *tawalli* in Arabic, which means to take as walī:

> "Whoever takes for his walīs Allah, His Messenger and the faithful [should know that] the walīs of Allah are indeed the victorious." (5:56)

According to this verse, the faithful are walīs for Allah swt, the Holy Prophet (S) and his successors (A.S). Again, in another verse, undertaking wilāyah (guardianship) of the righteous by Allah swt is also called "Tawalli" in Arabic, which means to take as walī:

> "My walī is indeed Allah who sent down the Book, and He takes wilāyah of the righteous." (7:196)

According to this usage, Allah swt is the Walī of the faithful (the righteous). So Tawalli (to take as walī) is mutual in that Allah swt is the Walī of the faithful: "Allah is the Walī of the faithful" (2:257) and also true believers are Allah swt's walīs: "Look! The friends (walīs) of Allah will indeed have no fear nor will they grieve." (10:62)

In *Tafsīr-e Nemuneh*, the following explanation is given for the above verse:

> Awlīyā' (walīs in Arabic] is the plural form of walī which is derived from "waliya" (in Arabic, the infinitive form of walī in the past tense, normally taken as the original root of the verb), "yaliy" (the infinitive form of walī in the present tense). The original root of the verb means that no intermediate

> agent exists between two things which are successive. For this reason, everything or everyone that is close to another, whether by place, time, genealogy (family) or status, is called walī. And this is the reason that the word walī is used for guardian, friend and so on.
>
> So Allah's walīs are those for whom there is no kind of obstacle or any distance between them and Allah swt. These are the ones from whose hearts all veils have been removed and in the light of knowledge, faith and good deeds, they see Allah swt (with their heart) in such a way that there remains no doubt for them...[6]

The Holy Prophet (S) and the Imams (A.S) are our walīs and if we accept them as our walīs, we are also their walīs. Perhaps it is for this reason that the Arabic verbal mode of mufā'alah (a verbal mode in Arabic which normally indicates that an action is mutual) is frequently used to indicate a mutual relationship between the Holy Prophet (S) and the Imams (A.S) on the one hand and us on the other hand. For example, in the sermon of Ghadīr, the Holy Prophet (S) stated:

> "For whomsoever I was mawlā, 'Ali (S) is then his mawlā. O' Allah! Take the one as walī (or mawlā) who takes him as his walī and consider the one as your enemy who considers him as an enemy."[7]

So muwalat (taking as walī) is a mutual relationship. In the prayer which follows Zīyārat-e Āl-e Yāsīn, we implore Allah swt to: "Grant me devotion filled with the light of taking Muhammad (S) and his Household (A.S) as walīs."

When somebody or something is close to another in such a way that there is nothing between them as an obstacle, the root verb walayah (infinitive form in the past tense) and yalīyu (infinitive form in the present tense) are used in Arabic to form other derivatives from them. For example, a derived verb form of them is used in the following verse from the Holy Qur'an:

"…the faithless who live in your vicinity" (9: 123)

This denotes those faithless people who are living near Muslims without any other tribes or groups between them and the Muslims.

If we wanted to emphasize the mutuality of the wilāyah relationship, we would use its verbal mode of mufā'alah (which was mentioned and explained above). With respect to the faithless it is not right to use muwālāt, because although Allah swt is close to them, they are far from Him and so there is no such mutual relationship of muwālāt. But in the case of the believers, where Allah swt is their Mawlā and they are His Mawlā, then there is a mutual relationship of muwālāt. The relationship between believers and the Infallibles is also mutual. They are walīs for the believers: "Your guardian is only Allah, His

Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakat while bowing down." (5: 55)

And also their mawlās as in:

"Whomever I was his mawlā, then ʻAli is his mawlā"[8]

And the believers can tell them:

"I am a walī for you."[9]

"I am a mawlā for you and I am among your followers."[10]

Ayatollah Misbāh explains this issue as follows:

> Sometimes when two things are close to one another, the wilāyah relationship is mutual. For example, the Qur'an says: "But the faithful, men and women, are walīs of one another." (9:71) Every believer is the walī for another, and vice versa, while both of them have influence over each other. The relationship between Allah swt and the believers is of the same kind. On the one hand we have: "Allah is the walī of the faithful…" (2:257) While on the other hand we have: "Look! The walīs of Allah…" (10: 62) So, Allah is the Walī of the faithful and also the faithful are walīs of Allah.[11]

Elsewhere, he states:

> Thus, the relationship of wilāyah is mutual and both sides influence each other. Naturally when two friends have common beliefs and emotions, they influence each other's behaviour: "But the faithful, men and women, are comrades of one another." (9:71) Both sides are walīs for each other and both influence each other. However, it is not only amongst mankind and sometimes this relationship is formed between "Allah" and "mankind"."[12]

Note: It should be noted that the mutuality of the relationship does not necessarily mean the equality of the two sides in this relationship. Certainly, wilāyah of Allah swt over the believers differs from the believers' wilāyah with Allah swt. And also the wilāyah of divinely appointed leaders i.e. the Prophet and the Imams over the believers differs from the wilāyah of the believers with them. One side is the leader and the other side is the disciple. One is to be obeyed and the other is obedient. One is guiding and the other is receiving guidance. But so much love, closeness and mutual understanding exists between the two sides that it is as if there is a kind of reciprocity and partnership in this relationship.[13]

Essential elements of wīlāyah

Now, we will briefly study the essential elements of wilāyah. The author has been thinking for a long time about the essence and nature

of our wilāyah relationship with Allah swt, His Apostle (S) and the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S). Although the author considers himself to be very far from a thorough comprehension of this issue, he does believe that wilāyah has three essential elements:

1. Love and devotion

2. Knowledge

3. Obedience

Wīlāyah is not regarded as any common or usual kind of guardianship or mastery. There must be devotion, sincerity and true-heartedness between different parties involved in wilāyah. When one considers Allah swt or His Apostle (S) as his walī, most surely it does not mean guardianship of the kind practiced by worldly rulers or tyrannical leaders, who rule only over bodies and not over souls. As was mentioned before, although Allah swt is in one sense the Walī for all beings in creation, however, He allowed mankind to choose a walī for himself in a responsible manner and thus the believer is the one who, through knowledge and love, chooses Allah swt as his Walī. Therefore based on Allah swt's blessed command, he will then benefit from the wilāyah of Allah swt's Apostle (S.) and his successors (A.S).

The kind of knowledge meant here is considered to be far deeper than the usual knowledge or understanding that exists between any superior and his inferior or even between two neighbours or

colleagues; which is normally nothing more than the common knowledge without which no relationship can be formed. The knowledge which is meant here is the one that is sometimes called the "truth of knowledge". It is comprehensive and at the same time so profound and effective that the one who possesses it cannot disregard or disobey what or whom the knowledge is about. In other words, the true believer who accepts wilāyah, knows his walīs i.e. Allah swt, then His Apostle (S) and then the Imams (A.S) to the best of his ability. He then becomes captivated and enthralled by them,[14] organizes his life based on obedience to them,[15] respects and attends to their will before his own[16] and eventually considers their pleasure as his own.[17]

When the above explanation is taken into consideration, it becomes clear why it is of utmost importance to know the "Imam of the Age (A.S)".[18] "Knowing the Imam of the Age (A.S)" would not merely involve the kind of common knowledge that everyone could have at any time. Knowing the Imam of the Age (a.s) means knowing the personality and teachings of the Imam (A.S), knowing his age and knowing what the Imam (A.S) wants us to do in different situations and circumstances. This kind of knowledge can be the preliminary step towards action for everyone and can lead both individuals and society as a whole to success and happiness.

Collective Nature of Wilāyah

Following on from, and in addition to, the issues discussed previously, this paper will introduce and explain the idea that wilāyah is a close spiritual bond between believers and the Infallibles which binds their destinies in this world and in the hereafter. Contrary to what many people think, wilāyah is not the relationship between individual believers and the Prophet and the Imams, but rather it is the relationship between all believers and them and also amongst the believers themselves. For example, in our time, Imam Mahdi (A.S) is the walī of all the believers, and also the believers are his walīs and each others' as well:

> "But the faithful, men and women, are walīs of one another: they bid what is right and forbid what is wrong and maintain the prayer, give the alms, and obey Allah and His Apostle. It is they to whom Allah will soon grant His mercy. Indeed Allah is all-Mighty, all-Wise." (9: 71)

> "Indeed those who have believed and migrated and waged jihad with their possessions and persons in the way of Allah, and those who gave [them] shelter and help, they are walīs of one another. As for those who have believed but did not migrate, you have no

> walāyah with them whatsoever until they migrate…" (8: 72)

Unbelievers also have leaders and they are walīs for their leaders and for each other:

> "As for the faithless, they are walīs of one another..." (8: 73)

> "...Indeed the wrongdoers are walīs of one another, but Allah is the Walī of the god wary." (45: 19)

The destinies of unbelievers and their leaders are also tied to one another. Those who follow a leader in this world, take him as walī, and also take each other as walīs, will be gathered together in the Hereafter and will be led together to Heaven or Hell. The Holy Qur'an states:

> "The day We shall summon every group of people with their imam, then whoever is given his book in his right hand they will read it, and they will not be wronged so much as a single date-thread." (17: 71)

Commenting on this verse, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī states:

> "We can understand from the verse that it is about Pharaoh, one of the leaders who led people astray: "On the Day of Resurrection he will lead his people

> and conduct them into the Fire: an evil goal for the incoming!" (11: 98) And also from the following verse: "So that Allah may separate the bad ones from the good, and place the bad on one another, and pile them up together, and cast them into hell..." (8: 37)
>
> Also, from many other verses, it is understood that people who go astray never become separated from their walīs. The inevitable result of such a belief is that they will be gathered accompanying their leaders on the Day of Judgment… therefore the apparent understanding would be that the imam of every group is the one whom is taken by those people as their walī, whether he is the imam of the Right or the imam of the Wrong."[19]

'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī quotes a hadith from Imam Sādiq (A.S) which is cited in *Tafsīr-e Burhān* from Ibn Shahr Āshūb which says:

> "Do you not praise Allah? On the Day of Resurrection, He will summon all groups to join whom they have taken as their walīs. We will join the Apostle of God (S) and you will join us."[20]

In *Tafsīr-e Nemūneh*, the same hadith goes on saying:

> "Where do you think you will be taken? By the Lord of Ka'bah, to Heaven. (Imam (A.S) repeated the last sentence three times.)"[21]

'Allāmah Tabātabāeī also quotes from *Tafsīr-e 'Ayāshī* that Imam Sādiq (A.S) commented on the verse 71 of Chapter Isrā' by saying:

> "On the Day of Resurrection Allah will ask: Does not your God's justice necessitate separating people according to whom they have taken as their walīs? They will answer: Yes." Then Imam Sādīq (A.S) said: "Then Allah will order them to be separated from each other and they will do so."[22]

The Holy Qur'an states about the faithless: "The faithless will be driven to hell in throngs…" (39: 71) And also about the faithful: "Those who are wary of their Lord will be led to paradise in throngs…" (39: 73) There is much evidence regarding this matter.

Thus, relationships by blood, through marriage and all other customary and conventional ones come to an end when we experience death. Then every person as an individual is responsible before Allah swt:

> "And each of them will come to Him individually on the Day of Resurrection." (19: 95)

> "Certainly you have come to Us alone, just as We created you the first time, and left behind whatever We had bestowed on you. We do not see your intercessors with you —those whom you claimed to be [Our] partners in [deciding] you[r] [fate]. Certainly all links between you have been cut, and what you used to claim has forsaken you!" (6:94)

Depending on the way a person lives in this world and the walī he takes, he will be gathered into the group with which he is most in harmony and fits the most and then will follow his leader towards Heaven or Hell.

Furthermore, it should be realised that the love and devotion between the faithful and their leaders, and also amongst the faithful themselves will last and they will also receive much help from Allah swt and from the righteous leaders in His court. However, the faithless, even if grouped together, will receive no kindness or devotion from each other:

> "On that day, friends will be one another's enemies, except for the god wary." (43: 67)

Indeed, the faithless will implore Allah swt to give their friends more punishment:

> "He will say, ' Enter, along with the nations who passed before you of jinn and humans, into the Fire!' Every time that a nation enters [hell], it will curse its sister [nation]. When they all rejoin in it, the last of them will say about the first of them, 'Our Lord, it was they who led us astray; so give them a double punishment of the Fire.' He will say, 'It is double for each [of you], but you do not know.'" (7:38)

The leaders of the wrongdoers will denounce their followers:

> "When those who were followed will disown the followers, and they will sight the punishment while all their means of recourse will be cut off." (2: 166)

When the followers become aware of their leaders' powerlessness and denouncement of them, they will also want to denounce their leaders:

> "And when the followers will say, 'Had there been another turn for us, we would disown them as they disown us [now]!' Thus shall Allah show them their deeds as regrets for themselves, and they shall not leave the Fire." (2: 167)

It is important to note that when the followers experience their leaders' unkindness and denouncement of them, instead of saying that they will now denounce their leaders, they will say, "Would that we

could return to the world to denounce our misguided leaders as they have now done to us." It might mean that they know that it is too late to denounce their leaders. They spent their whole lives following those who never really loved them and just used them for their own benefit. And then they will all go down into the depths of the Hell together and will not be able to separate themselves from each other.

The social function of wīlāyah

In this section, we will study what the faithful are like and how the wīlāyah of Allah swt creates unity amongst them in such a way that in all situations, whether in times of comfort or hardship, in this world or the hereafter, they always think about each other, love each other and they are quite willing to sacrifice their lives, property and time not only for their walīs, but also for their sisters and brothers in religion. This is what they learn from their leaders, who are the exemplars of loyalty and kindness and are not neglectful of their followers even for a moment.

We should carefully consider why the Holy Prophet (S) stated: "The faithful are like components of one building where each part supports another." And "The faithful are like one soul." And "Friendship and compassion of the faithful make them like parts of one body; when some parts are in pain, the other parts would not be at rest."[23]

It is wīlāyah that makes an integrated and fully functioning body out of the faithful. It is wīlāyah that melts any kind of self-centeredness and egotism and causes love and self-sacrifice to flourish. Wīlāyah is the spirit and soul of Islam and it can give spiritual life to Islamic communities.

In what follows, we will study some important teachings from the most well-known supplications and ziyārāts concerning this issue:

Zīyārat-e ʻĀshūrā

In Zīyārat-e ʻĀshūrā we find ver profound ideas about the way the faithful should relate to each other and form a very united and homogenous community. For example, in one place we read:

> "O' Abā ʻAbdillāh! Indeed, I am at peace with whoever is at peace with you and I am at war with whoever makes war with you, until the Day of Resurrection."

What is emphasized in this part of Zīyārat-e ʻĀshūrā is that taking wīlāyah of the Imam (A.S) must have two results: to love his friends and to fight against his enemies. Therefore, it is by no means enough that one just loves Imam Husayn (A.S) and considers e.g. Yazīd as an enemy, rather one must love their friends and makes efforts to remain

always at peace with those who are at peace with them forever, right up until the Day of Resurrection. This is the real challenge; otherwise just to love the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S) is not difficult. The only time one should be able to claim that one loves the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S) is when one loves their friends and by no means harms or hurts them.

In another part we implore:

> "O'Abā 'Abdillāh! Indeed I seek closeness to Allah and His Apostle and to the Commander of the Faithful (A.S) and to Fatimah (A.S) and to Hasan (A.S) and to you through wīlāyah with you and by denouncing the ones who martyred you and those who made war with you and through denouncing those who laid the foundations and those who built upon them and carried out oppression and cruelty upon you all and upon your followers."

In this part of the zīyarat, the way of seeking nearness to Allah swt, the Holy Prophet (S) and his Household (A.S) is considered to be through taking wīlāyah of Imam Husayn (A.S) and denouncing those who fought against him and whoever laid the foundations for oppressing the Household (A.S) and it becomes clear that this denunciation also includes those who oppress the followers of the Imams (A.S). So, the issue is not confined to Karbalā or to those in Imam Husayn (A.S)'s army and Yazīd's army. It is not even confined

to the early stages of Islam and those on the side of the Household of the Prophet (A.S) and those on the opposition's side; but rather this positioning will continue until the Day of Resurrection and will be repeated in all lands that are like Karbalā and at all times throughout history which are like 'Āshūrā. This is why we say: "All days are 'Āshūrā and all lands are Karbalā".

Therefore, everyone must be very careful not to do any injustice to any person, since this is one of the greatest sins in Islam and everyone must be extraordinarily careful not to do injustice to the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S) since this is considered by the Ahl al-bayt (A.S) as an act of injustice against themselves, no matter whether the person who is unjust claims to be himself one of their followers or not.

Immediately following the above section, when the supplicant has had some mental preparation, he states:

> "…and I seek nearness to Allah and then to you through wīlāyah with you and your friends and through denouncing your enemies and those who fought against you and denouncing their adherents and followers."

In the above section, the way of seeking nearness to Allah, the Holy Prophet (S) and his Household (A.S) is considered to be through taking wīlāyah of the Holy Prophet (S) and his Household (A.S) and

wīlāyah of their friends and their followers and through denouncing the enemies of the Household (A.S), their followers and their friends. So, one important factor in seeking nearness to Allah swt and the Household (A.S) is befriending and taking wīlāyah of their followers. Then, following on from the above section, the section mentioned first is repeated again with the addition of an important issue:

> "Surely, I am at peace with those who are at peace with you, and I am at war with those who are at war with you; and I am a walī of those who are in wīlāyah with you and an enemy to those who are enemies to you."

Then we implore Allah regarding some requests:

> "So then I ask Allah, who has honored me with recognition of all of you and recognition of your walīs and has also granted me the opportunity to denounce your enemies, that He places me with you, both in this world and the hereafter, and that He makes firm my honest and truthful stance in your presence both in this world and in the hereafter. And I ask Him (Allah) that He enables me to reach the most praised station that you have with Allah and that He grants me the ability to seek justice for those who shed your blood

> with the rightly guided Imam, who shall surely reappear and speak the truth."

Thus for the four requests we implore Allah swt, "who has honored me with recognition of all of you and recognition of your walīs and has also granted me the opportunity to denounce your enemies". These requests must be related to knowing the Household (A.S) and their walīs as well as denouncement of their enemies. Generally, when we call on Allah swt using one of His Attributes and then ask for something or when we implore Him for something and then praise Him with some of His Attributes, there should be some form of correlation between the request and the Attribute. For example, it is stated in the Holy Qur'an:

> "Say, 'My Lord, forgive and have mercy, and You are the best of the merciful.'" (23: 118)

In this verse, there is a correlation between imploring for forgiveness and mercy and the attribute of mercifulness. Another example is:

> "He said, 'My Lord! Forgive me, and grant me a kingdom that does not befit anyone except me. Indeed You are the All-Munificent.'" (38: 35)

Here there is a strong correlation between asking for forgiveness and a kingdom from Allah swt by appealing to His Munificence. The same can be said about the following verse:

> "...and turn to us clemently. Indeed You are the All-Clement, the All-Merciful." (2: 118)

So it can be concluded that having recognition of the Household (A.S) and their walīs and denouncing their enemies are necessary for the fulfillment of those four requests. In fact, we implore Allah swt, who has bestowed the above-mentioned three prerequisites, to grant us our demands and show us His Mercy. The four requests are:

> 1. To be with the Household (A.S) in this world and the hereafter.
>
> 2. To stand firm and be on the right path with the Household (A.S)
>
> 3. To achieve the praiseworthy status that the Household (A.S) have before Allah swt.
>
> 4. To take revenge for the blood of the Household (A.S) in the company of the Imam of our Time (A.S)

To be with the Household (A.S) in this world does not mean physically being with them; for it is not possible during the Time of Concealment, nor was it achievable for many Shī'ites even at other times. Furthermore it might even be quite unpleasant if everyone wanted to go to the residence of the Imams (A.S) and live there. In view of what was mentioned before, it seems that knowing the

Household (A.S) and more specifically the Imam of our Time (A.S) means that we know the Imam (A.S), the time, and the Imam's (A.S) aims and goals at this time. We should know the faithful and those who have his wilāyah and we should have enough knowledge about their condition, needs, potentials and their efforts. We also have to know our enemies and keep away from their plans and actions (by denouncing them) and by generally keeping away from associating with them.. If we do all the these things, then we can be hopeful of being considered as being with the Household (A.S) in this world and the hereafter, remaining on the right path and not going astray and then in the end being gathered together with the Household (A.S) on the Day of Resurrection. As we read:

"To be assembled with you (A.S)"[24]

Our ultimate goal is to follow the Holy Prophet (S) and his Household (A.S) when entering Heaven and to live where they live.. Before then, our short-term wish is to be beside Imam Mahdī (A.S), whether alive or resurrected, at his service and not against him when he (A.S) starts his movement:

"…..in your return and …. in your government"[25]

> "O Allah! If death occurs between me and him (before his reappearance) death which You have made necessary and decreed for your servants, then raise me from my grave, wrapped in my shroud, my sword

> unsheathed, my spear bared, answering the call of the caller in cities as well as deserts."[26]

If the faithful are like one body, united and gathered around the walī of Allah swt or his deputies, and support each other from the heart in word and deed, happiness will surely be granted to them in this world and the hereafter. Furthermore the bitter period of separation and the Time of Concealment will pass and the sweet time of reappearance and union will come; about which Imam Mahdi (A.S) has stated:

> "Surely, if our Shī'ites – may Allah help them for their obedience to Him – were united in their hearts securely on [their] promises [with us], there would not be any delay in [the blessing of] meeting us."[27]

It is very likely that if the Shī'ites are separated and disconnected, they will be surrounded by calamities and deviations and their enemies who appear to be friends and 'wolves in sheep's clothing' will hunt them down.

Du'a of Nudbah

In that part of the Du'a of Nudbah where the prayers reach fever pitch and total enlightenment and the supplicant adoringly implores Imam Mahdi (A.S), he says:

> Is there any helper with whom I can prolong my weeping and lamenting?
>
> Is there any lonely mourner whom I may accompany in mourning when he mourns in private?
>
> Is there any eye in pain for you like an eye pricked by thorn so that my eye can help it with tears?

Although weeping and crying about something might be considered a private and personal matter; however here we are being taught that even in this situation, if we want to express our feelings, we should seek out people with the same beliefs as our own with whom we could then cry more. It does not just mean that when a group of people cry together their combined weeping will be more effective than each individual's alone, but rather it means that when friends cry and weep in each other's company, everyone can cry more and also for longer. This is the fruit of teamwork that increases the efficiency of each individual.

The next question is: "Is there any lonely mourner whom I may accompany in mourning when he mourns in private?" So this is not just a matter of being limited to reading the Du'a of Nudbah in the mosque or other places. In addition to their social relationships in general, the Shi'a should be aware of each other's personal lives in order to share their needs and ideas and thus be allowed in each other's private lives..

It is narrated that once a person called Barid 'Ijli said to Imam Bāqir (A.S) : "You have many followers in Kufah. If you order them, they will obey and follow you." Imam (A.S) stated: "Can every one of them put his hand into the pocket of his brother in faith when in need, and thus eliminate his need?" He answered: "No." Imam (A.S) stated: "So (if they are mean and niggardly amongst themselves concerning their possessions) they would be even more niggardly about their lives."[28] It is interesting that the Imam tests their obedience and loyalty towards himself by asking how much they are ready to share their possessions with their brothers and sisters in faith.

Continuing with the Du'a of Nudbah, after that it is asked: "Is there any eye in pain for you like an eye pricked by thorn so that my eye can help it with tears?" The important point here is that the request for a helper is made once, whilst the announcement of readiness to help is made twice. The sign of a decent society is that its people's readiness to provide help to other people is more than their expectation of receiving help from others, even for important, public goals. Whilst in an unhealthy society, even if its people work for the sake of religion (or think that they do so), firstly each person only cares about his own job, secondly he considers his own job as the most important of all and thirdly although he expects everyone else to help him, yet he is not willing to make any effort for other people or offer any of his own facilities to others.

Many different parts of the Du'a of Nudbah raise the idea of the spirit of teamwork and care for others. The supplicant is not only seeking to fulfill his own personal needs, but also prays for others. For example, we read:

> "Will we be able shortly to come over to you on your reappearance to which we eagerly look forward?
>
> When will we be able to drink from your streams (of benevolence) to quench our thirst (for your benevolence)?
>
> When shall you see us and we see you whilst you have unfurled the banner of Islam for victory, at the same time seeing us gathered around you when we, with utmost sincerity (out of love and affection for you), have gathered around you and you are leading the masses? At that time we see you having filled the earth with justice.
>
> So, O Allah! Convey to him from us our sincere greetings and salutations and through these greetings, O our Lord, enhance our honour; and make his place (in Paradise) a home and resting place for us; and give him precedence over us in completing Your Bounties on him until You grant us a place in Your Paradise

> and the companionship of martyrs from among the pure and sincere people."

The supplicant's requests are for the establishment of truth, the elimination of falsehood, dignity for the walīs of Allah swt and debasement of His enemies, remaining on the right path and not being separated from the Household (A.S):

> "O Allah! Through him (Imam) establish the truth and through him destroy falsehood and through him guide those who are close to You and through him disgrace Your enemies.
>
> O Allah! Establish such a relationship and love between us and him (our Imam) that will give us the honour of the company of his ancestors. And let us be of those who always seek their company and stay permanently under their shelter."

Du'a al-'Ahd

The spirit of teamwork is also strongly felt in Du'a al-'Ahd. This becomes clear where, for example, the supplicant as a Shi'a of Imam Mahdi (A.S) implores Allah swt to bless his walī (A.S). Here we see that he does not only care about himself, or at most, his parents, but

before himself and his family, he cares about the faithful men and women everywhere around the world and implores Allah swt thus:

> "O Allah, convey to our master, the leader, the guide, the guided, he who rises by Your Command, blessings of Allah be upon him and his pure forefathers from the believing men and women in the east of the earth and its west, in its plains and its mountains, its lands and its seas, and from me and my parents, blessings which weigh as much as of Allah's throne and ink of His words, and whatever His knowledge enumerates and His book encompasses."

How many believers would there have been in the east and the west of the known world when this supplication was taught by Imam Sadiq (A.S)? How many Shi'a were there in China for example? How many believers travelled on the seas or how many of them were living beyond the seas? Would it not appear that Imam (A.S) wanted to tell you and me that it is seriously expected from us, the Shi'a during the Time of Concealment, who live in an age of propagation and participation in Shi'a societies around the world, to begin our days thinking about the Imam of our Time, concerned about his Shi'a, considering ourselves as part of a whole and thinking about the ummah before making requests about our own personal matters?

At the end of this du'a, we say:

> "O Allah! Remove this sorrow (of concealment) from this nation by his presence and hasten for us his reappearance. They (the disbelievers) consider it to be distant while we consider it to be near. For the sake of Your Mercy, O the Most Merciful of all the Merciful."

Duʿa of Iftitāh

The Duʿa of Iftitāh, especially towards the end, is full of references to issues concerned with community and care for society and the world which relate to the entire body engaged in wilāyah., It is sufficient to read the section below to justify the above claim:

> "O' Allah, we ardently desire [his] honourable government, in which Thou should reactivate Islam and stimulate its followers, and humble and humiliate the imposters and their double dealing, and include us among those who invite people unto Thy obedience, and lead them to Thy approved path, and give us the good of this world and the world to come.
>
> O' Allah, through him, set in order our disorder; gather and unite our flock; stitch together our sundered separation; turn our want and poverty into sufficiency; lift us up from our degradation; free us

> from our misery; pull us out from our debts; eradicate poverty amongst us.
>
> O' Allah, we feel uneasy about and are disturbed by the departure of our Prophet, Thy blessings be on him and on his family, the absence of our walī, too many enemies, our numerical scarcity, widespread disorder, and the vicissitudes of time.
>
> So send blessings on Muhammad and on his family, and help us to overcome this state of affairs at once.
>
> Disperse the ominous clouds hanging over our heads; lend a helping hand to achieve success; bring in the rule of justice and fair play, make us bright and free us from grief, and take us in Your Care. (It is possible) through Your Mercy, O the Most Merciful."

It is as if we are reading the articles of an association which set out its aims and objectives as well as its difficulties and their solutions. This is an association in which there is no selfishness, egotism, division and polarization, negligence regarding enemies, hopelessness or despair.

Zīyārat-e Amīn Allah

Zīyārat-e Amīn Allah is one of the most authentic and valid Zīyārats according to Shaykh 'Abbas Qumī and 'Allamah Majlisi and should be recited in all religious gatherings. It has an additional section which is found in *Kāmil al-Ziyārah*. Jabir quoted from Imam Baqir (A.S) that once Imam Sajjad (A.S) prayed and declared beside the tomb of Imam Ali (A.S) that:

> "O' Allah, You are my God, Master and Walī. Forgive our friends and withhold our enemies from us and keep them so busy that they cannot bother us. And make the word of truth highest and make the word of falsehood lowest. Indeed, You have power over all things."

The above sentences indicate that Imams (A.S) have great concern for their followers and also deep concern about the question of truth and falsehood in general. Thus, we must take both of these things into consideration: to be concerned about our friends and walīs both in our prayers and in practice, and to spare no efforts in making truth prevail over the falsehood.

In a letter to Ishaq Neyshāburi, Imam 'Askari (A.S) expressed his love and concern for his friends as follows:

> "May Allah swt bless you! Due to Allah's Mercy, we are the family that constantly cares for our friends and we are happy when Allah's Mercy and Blessings embrace them and we consider each gift bestowed on to them by Allah, the Exalted, as great. May Allah swt completes His Blessings upon you and your friends, and on whom Allah swt has had mercy upon and has shown the truth to them as He did to you. They turn their face away from the falsehood and would not sink into transgression. And to complete the blessings upon you so that you may enter into Heaven. There is no blessing from God that saying Alhamdulilla (Praise be to Allah!) and praising Allah - Exalted be His names- does not serve as gratitude and thanking for it. So Then I say: Alhamdulillah as much as all the praises which one who praises would praise for the grace Allah swt has bestowed upon you and by which He has saved you from destruction …"

What kind of love and devotion is it that makes Imams (A.S) care for their friends constantly? The pleasure of Shi'a makes Imams (A.S) happy and their hardships makes Imams (A.S) sad. They consider as great every gift bestowed by Allah swt on the shi'a, as great and know that they themselves are obliged to thank Allah swt because of those gifts and they implore Allah swt to complete His blessings upon the

Shi'a by granting them permission to enter to Heaven. It would be even more interesting when we know that Ishaq Neiyshāburi and his friends were not very good people with regards to Imam 'Askari (A.S) and his father, Imam Hadi (A.S). In this letter which is filled with love and devotion for them, Imam (A.S) states:

> "During the age of the previous Imam (A.S) and also during my lifetime up until now, you have undertaken actions which I disagree with.
>
> To which wrong things are you are being directed and to which destination you are heading like animals? You turn your faces from the truth and believe in the falsehood and show ingratitude for the blessings from Allah." [29]

Imam (A.S), whose heart is so painful because of due to the bad actions of Ishaq Niyshāburi and his friends, still shows love towards them to the extent that even a father does not do towards his children. If the last part of the letter did not exist, one would suppose that the letter was addressed to the most sincere and devoted Shi'a .

In another letter, Imam 'Askari (A.S) wrote to people of Qum as follows:

> "…Allah, the Exalted, joined you and us in a close relationship and made a kinship like relationship

amongst us, for Imam Rida (A.S) stated: 'The faithful person is like a real brother in relationship to another person.'"[30]

We hope that the this article, which used only a few of the many Islamic sources concerning the social aspect of wilāyah, could be a step towards reinforcement of religious brotherhood which will then go further by taking other scientific and practical steps. .Certainly, reinforcement and strengthening of the relationship of wilāyah amongst the Shī'ites of the Household (A.S) will create the best possible conditions for Islamic unity in the same way that Islamic unity creates the best conditions for friendship and collaboration amongst believers all over the world.

Conclusion

In the present article, the meaning of wilaah was studied using the Holy Qur'an and hadiths It became clear that wilāyah is not just a relationship between individual believers and Allah swt's walīs, nor is it between individual believers and those who have wilāyah. Wilāyah is a social issue that is based on three essential elements: knowledge, love and obedience. In other words, wilāyah is a kind of strong spiritual bond which connects believers to the Infallibles swt's representative (A.S) and enables them to have the same aim and destination in this world and the hereafter. Wilāyah is a relationship

between all believers collectively and the Infallibles (A.S) and also amongst the believers themselves. Wilāyah establishes a united society and an integrated body of believers which is ruled by the love and devotion amongst them.

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[1] To see commentaries and hadiths regarding this verse refer to *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr Al-Qur'an*, vol. 6, pp. 5-25 and *Tafsīr-e Nemuneh*, vol. 4, pp. 421-434.

[2] "Mawlā means walī, guardian, helper and friend." *Tafsīr-e Nemuneh*, vol. 21, p. 429. The Holy Qur'an also states:

> ألم تعلم أنّ الله له ملک السموات و الارض و ما لکم من دون الله من ولي و لا نصير (بقره: 107)
>
> "Do you not know that to Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth? And besides Allah you do not have any walī or any helper." (1:107).

Many other verses also emphasize this issue.

[3] The Holy Qur'an states: "Whoever takes Satan as a guardian (walī) instead of Allah has certainly incurred a manifest loss." (4:119); "Say, 'Shall I take for guardian (walī) [anyone] other than Allah, the originator of the heavens and the earth, who feeds and is not fed?'" (6:14). "Who feeds and is not fed" could mean that Allah swt is the Benefactor but He is not a beneficiary.

[4] Cf. 18:26, 29:22, 32:4, 42:31, …

[5] Du'a of Nudbah

[6] *Tafsīr-e-Nemuneh*, vol 8, p. 333.

[7] In these sentences 'taking as walī' is in the verbal mode of mufā'alah which means this relation is mutual.

[8] From the sermon of Ghadīr.

[9] Zīyārat-e Āl-e-Yāsīn

[10] Abū Basīr's talk with Imam Baqir (a.s.) cf. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 27, p. 30.

[11] *Dar Partu Wilāyat* (In the Light of Wilāyah), p. 265.

[12] In the book *Dar Partu Wilāyat* (In the Light of Wilāyah), pp. 290-291, the author emphasizes that the relationship of wilāyah between Allah swt and mankind is mutual. Ayatollah Misbāh then explains that Allah swt is not influenced by mankind and says:

> "When the relationship of wilāyah is formed between mankind and Allah, then could it mean that Allah influences us and we influence Him? The answer is clear: surely, in such a case, there could not exist any counter influencing. It is only Allah who influences us. The wilāyah relationship between mankind and Allah means that man's knowledge grows to be the knowledge gained from Allah, his love becomes a kind of love Allah wants, his behavior becomes so and etc.
>
> Then, in the wilāyah relationship between mankind and Allah, Allah does not gain any influence from man; in fact, He does not gain any influence from any being. However this wilāyah is mutual as well…
>
> Although in this case, wilāyah is also mutual, the influence is just from one side. In other words, the connection between Allah and man is mutual, which means that Allah is close to man and vice versa, but influencing and gaining influence is not mutual." (*ibid*.., pp. 291 & 292)

[13]This issue is more tangible when considering the relationship of muwālāt between the Holy Prophet (S), the Imams (A.S) and their follwoers, and it is emphasized more. However, Allah swt is so much higher in status in comparison to the believers that one needs to be considerably more careful about the usage of words and thus the word 'muwālāt' is used less, although both sides are walīs for each other and sometimes the verbal mode of mufā'alah is even used (that Allah swt is grammatically subject and the believers are the object). For example, in the sermon of Ghadīr, the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h) says this sentence about 'Ali (a.s.) "O Allah! Be the walī of whosoever is the walī of him ['Ali (a.s.)]". In the case of the Imams and the believers because both the believers and the Imams (a.s.) are human and created beings, one can talk more easily about the relationship between them and so the word 'muwālāt' is used frequently.

[14] Verse 35: 28 and other similar verses explain how knowledge leads to captivation with and awe of Allah swt.

[15] Verse 3: 31 and other similar verses explain how love and devotion lead to obedience.

[16] Verse 33: 6 and other similar verses explain how the right and will of the walī is prior to the right and will of one's self.

[17] Verse 4: 65 and other similar verses indicate that the believer, in addition to obeying his walī, must be satisfied with his decision and must consider his walī's will as prior to his own.

[18] Referring to the prophetic hadith reported by all Islamic schools of thoughts: "One who dies and does not know the Imam of his age, has died of the Age of Ignorance", 'Allamah Majlisī considered this hadith as a mass reported hadith among all Islamic schools of thoughts. Cf. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 8, p. 368.

[19] *Tarjomeh Al-Mīzan*, vol. 13, p. 229.

[20] *Al-Mīzan fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an*, vol. 13, p. 170.

[21] *Tafsir-e Nemūneh*, vol. 12, pp. 204, 213.

[22] *Al-Mīzan fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an*, vol. 13, p. 171.

[23] *Tafsir-e Nemūneh*, vol. 3, pp. 33.

[24] *Ziyarat Jami'ah Kabirah*
[25] *Ibid.*
[26] *Du'a al-'Ahd*
[27] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 53, p. 177.
[28] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 52, p. 273.
[29] *Pishwayan-e Hidayat* (the Leaders of Guidance), vol. 13, PP. 269-270
[30] *Ibid.* p. 277.